



'DINING WITH DIABETES' BRINGS NUTRITION EDUCATION TO RURAL COMMUNITIES

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Heart disease, stroke, loss of vision, kidney failure and amputation: These are some of the grim health complications associated with diabetes. Fortunately, all of these outcomes can be avoided with proper care and knowledge.

Unfortunately, for the 33,000 adults in North Dakota with diabetes, there are only about 60 certified diabetes educators and about 270 registered dietitians. And most of them practice in Fargo, Grand Forks, Bismarck and Minot. Many individuals in rural communities haven't had access to local diabetes education. Until now.

In May 2005, Jane Edwards, assistant professor and Extension specialist in the Department of Health, Nutrition and Exercise Sciences at NDSU, began working on an Extension program titled, "Dining with Diabetes: North Dakota Style."

Edwards adapted the community-based nutrition education program from a curriculum developed by former NDSU nutrition department chair, Guen Brown. Brown, who now works for the Extension Service at West Virginia University, created "Dining with Diabetes:

A Program for People with Diabetes and their Families," at WVU in 1998. Since then the program has been delivered more than 200 times to nearly 5,000 participants in West Virginia.

NDSU Extension agents and medical partners were trained in Bismarck in 2005. The following year, "Dining with Diabetes: North Dakota Style" was presented in six counties: Foster, Grand Forks, Walsh, Richland, Cass and Cavalier. Anyone affected by diabetes, including family members, could attend free of charge, thanks to funding by the Dakota Medical Foundation.

Participants watched food demonstrations and taste-tested recipes which focused on healthy meal plans. Grocery shopping, food preparation tips, label reading and portion sizes were discussed. The curriculum was delivered during five, two-and-a-half hour lessons for a three-month period. Topics included carbohydrates, sweeteners, fats, sodium, vitamins, minerals and fiber as well as information related to the role of medical laboratory tests used to monitor diabetes management. However, Edwards points out the program does not replace individual medical nutrition therapy provided in a medical setting.

"This program provides an opportunity to ask questions and share experiences about basic meal planning and other lifestyle issues related to diabetes management within a supportive group setting,"

ute Chili
 round Chuck (or mix w/ Turkey)
 an V8 (spicy good)
 Brooks Hot & Spicy Chili beans
 Rotelle
 powder to taste
 an Cactus
 on meat in skillet, Add rest of ingredients
 ok (the longer, the better)

to taste

Edwards said. "This is a low-cost community-based educational program with the potential to increase awareness and knowledge of many life skills needed to better manage diabetes and thereby lower the potential for health-related complications."

The feedback from participants, local medical partners and Extension agents was positive. Of the 119 evaluations that were completed, there was a trend for improved lab values (A1c and blood pressure), both clinical indicators of diabetes control, as well as improved attitudes toward dietary and overall diabetes management.

Edwards says the program is really a shared success. "The program is both managed and delivered by NDSU Extension but has been supported by many entities throughout the state." The North Dakota Department of Health underwrote the initial training in Bismarck. Sen. Conrad did a video for the training about the importance of delivering cost effective community-based diabetes education in rural areas. The Dakota Medical Foundation funded the program for both the pilot and for the upcoming year. Donna Bernhardt, Grand Forks County Extension agent, developed the

recipes used within the curriculum with a focus on North Dakotan tastes. At the local level, Extension agents generously supported the many aspects of both management and delivery of the program.

This year the program will grow in two ways. Edwards teamed up with Jenna Johnson, exercise physiologist at MeritCare in Fargo, to develop educational materials related to "diabetes and physical activity." Also, two additional counties are scheduled to deliver the program, one in Ransom County and another on the Turtle Mountain Indian reservation in Rolette County. Funding for the second year will be provided by Dakota Medical Foundation and the North Dakota Department of Health.

Edwards said her next goal is to find stable funding. "Right now we go year to year. It would be great to know that the program had a stable base of funding to allow this program to be offered on a regular basis and in more counties," Edwards said.

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- Jane Edwards

